Background Paper:

WOMEN AND PART-TIME WORK IN NOVA SCOTIA

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PREFACE

The Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women was established in 1977 to monitor women's issues and to act as an advisory body to the provincial government. In its Plan of Action for 1988-89, the Council announced the establishment of a Women and Economic Equality Committee, charged to monitor and analyze a number of economic issues of concern to women. After careful consideration, the Committee determined that the issue of part-time work was of critical importance to women in Nova Scotia. Thus, the current investigation was undertaken with the aim of identifying the issues surrounding part-time work for women in Nova Scotia.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past 20 years, part-time workers have become a significant sector of the Canadian labour force. Julie White in the introduction to her study on part-time work (Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women) stated, "It would be difficult, perhaps, to find a subject more fraught with controversy than part-time work".[1] Indeed, the subject of part-time work has sparked considerable controversy among women, governments, business and labour. On one side, part-time work is viewed as advantageous to women because of the flexibility it allows us to more easily combine work and family responsibilities. On the other, part-time work has been denounced as detrimental to and exploitive of women, serving only the economic interests of employers.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a framework for discussion on the many issues raised by part-time work. The expansion of part-time work in the Nova Scotia economy will be examined and the resultant growth of a part-time labour force will be explored. The recommendations appearing at the end of this document have been formulated on the basis of the information gathered and contained in this paper.

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[1] Julie White, Women and Part-Time Work, Ottawa: Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 1983, p. 1.

PART-TIME WORK: WHAT IS IT?

Foremost to any discussion on part-time work is a need to ascertain its precise definition. This exercise is complicated by the fact that just what constitutes part-time work is a matter of considerable variety and debate. Consider the following terms: casual, temporary, seasonal, contract, permanent, job-sharing, part-year, flex-time. It is clear that part-time work can take many forms and can encompass many of the above categories.

There is no standard definition of part-time work. Statistics Canada defines part-time workers as those who work less than 30 hours per week and who do not consider themselves to be full-time. Alternatively, the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women (CACSW) identifies three main types of part-time workers[2]: (a) regular part-time workers: those who work less than the usual full-time weekly hours on a continuing basis; (b) casual part-time workers: those who work less than the usual full-time weekly hours but on an intermittent or short-term basis; and (c) part-year workers: those who work full-time weekly hours but only for part of the year. The Commission of Inquiry into Part-Time Work recommended a broader definition: "A part-time worker is one who works less than the normally scheduled weekly or monthly hours of work established for persons doing similar work".[3]

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[2] Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Part-Time Work -- Part-Time Rights: A Brief Presented to the Commission of Inquiry into Part-Time Work, September 1982, p. 3.

[3] Part-Time Work in Canada: Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Part-Time Work, Ottawa: Labour Canada, 1983, p. 23.

The importance of definition in a discussion of part-time work cannot be undervalued for, as attempts to negotiate benefits and labour standards for part-time workers have demonstrated, the matter of definition is fundamental to this debate. For the purposes of this paper, we prefer the Commission of Inquiry definition so as to include as many part-time workers as possible in our discussions. However, since we rely almost exclusively on data collected by Statistics Canada, and since their definition is more restrictive, it should be noted that the actual numbers of part-time workers will be under-estimated.[4]

PART-TIME WORKERS IN NOVA SCOTIA: WHO ARE THEY?

The rapid growth in the number of persons who work part-time is a well-documented aspect of employment growth in Canada -- a growth rate which is ten times that of full-time employment in the 1980s.[5] In 1953, 2.8 percent of all jobs in the Canadian economy were part-time. In Nova Scotia, this figure had increased to 11.7 percent in 1977 and to 16.1 percent by 1987.[6] In similar terms, today approximately one out of six employed persons works part-time.

Table 1 illustrates the growth of both full-time and part-time employment in Nova Scotia. Notably, the data show a dramatic increase in

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[4] Julie White, Women and Part-Time Work, Ottawa: Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 1983, p. 28.

[5] Hay Management Consultants, A Survey of Part-Time Employment in Federally Regulated Industries, Volume 1, Ottawa: Labour Canada, December 1985, p. 1.

[6] Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, 1987.

the growth of part-time employment as a percentage of full-time employment. It is well documented that women form the majority of part-time employees. In 1977, 67.7 percent of all part-time workers in Nova Scotia were women. By 1987, this figure had grown to 71.9 percent.

Table 1

Total Employment, Total Part-Time Employment,
Nova Scotia, Annual Averages, 1977-1987

Year	Total Employment (in '000s)			Total PT Employment (in '000s)			PT as % of Total Employment	Women as % of Total PT
	F&M	F	M	F&M	F	M		
1977	292	108	184	34	23	11	11.7	67.7
1979	311	117	194	37	26	10	11.7	70.3
1981	322	130	192	45	32	13	14.1	71.1
1983	320	133	187	49	35	15	15.4	71.4
1985	337	141	196	52	37	15	15.5	71.2
1987	354	153	201	57	41	16	16.1	71.9

Source: Statistics Canada

Table 2 shows the increase of women part-time workers as a percentage of all employed women. In 1975, one out of five employed women worked part-time. In 1987, more than one out of four women were employed part-time.

Table 2

Women 15 Years and Over Employed Part-Time as a Percentage of All Employed Women, Canada, Nova Scotia, 1975-1987.

Year	Canada	Nova Scotia
1975	20.3	19.8
1980	23.8	23.0
1985	26.3	26.2
1986	25.9	27.6
1987	25.3	26.8

Source: Statistics Canada

In a Statistics Canada study of employment patterns of elderly Canadians, Suzanne Methot notes that a considerably larger proportion of elderly workers than workers under the age of 65 are employed part-time. In 1986, 30 percent of employed men and 45 percent of employed women aged 65 and over worked part-time.[7] By comparison, in the employed population aged 25-64, just 3 percent of men and 22 percent of women worked part-time.

INVOLUNTARY PART-TIME WORK

Recent research into part-time work has documented the increase in the number of persons who work part-time because they are unable to find

[7] Suzanne Methot, "Employment Patterns of Elderly Canadians", Canadian Social Trends Autumn 1987, p. 8.

full-time jobs. These persons are referred to as involuntary part-time workers. In Statistics Canada terms, the category of involuntary part-time workers consists of those individuals who usually work part-time, that is, less than 30 hours per week, because they are unable to find full-time work.[a] Table 3 shows part-time and involuntary part-time employment in Nova Scotia. Women make up the vast majority of involuntary part-time workers in Nova Scotia.

Table 3

Part-Time and Involuntary Part-Time Employment,
Nova Scotia, Annual Averages, 1977-1987
(in '000s)

Year	Total Part-Time	Involuntary Part-Time		Women as % of Total Part-Time
		Total	Women	
1977	34	6	4	66.7
1979	37	7	5	71.4
1981	45	11	8	72.7
1983	49	17	8	70.6
1985	52	21	15	71.4
1987	57	22	16	72.7

Source: Statistics Canada

[a] Ernest B. Akyeampong, "Involuntary Part-Time Employment in Canada, 1975-1986", in Canadian Social Trends, Autumn 1987, p. 26.

With respect to women and part-time work, a question has frequently been asked: Is it that part-time work allows women the convenience and flexibility to combine family responsibilities and work or is it that inadequate child care alternatives prevent their full-scale participation in the work force?[9]

According to a recent U.S. report by the National Association of Working Women, nearly 35 percent of women who work part-time said they would be glad to add hours to their work-week if there were better child-care options available.[10]

PART-TIME JOBS

Part-time employment is more prevalent in the service sector of the economy than in the goods-producing industries. In 1986, about 90 percent of involuntary and 88 percent of voluntary part-time workers were employed in the service sector.[11] A survey of federally regulated industries in 1985 discovered a virtual absence of part-time employees in professional and managerial positions.[12]

Part-time work is common in the temporary help industry where firms provide temporary workers on contract to other establishments. According

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[9] Ontario Status of Women Council, Brief on Part-Time Employment, August 1982, p. 9.

[10] Susan McHenry and Linda Lee Small, "Does Part-Time Pay Off?", in Ms, March 1989, p. 90.

[11] Ernest Akyeampong, p. 29.

[12] Hay Management Consultants, p. 22.

to a recent study, women are the mainstay of the temporary help industry: in 1986, about 76 percent of the industry's paid workers were women.[13] In 1986, slightly more than one in three paid jobs in this industry was part-time.[14]

There is an enormous variety of work schedules in part-time jobs. Table 4 shows the most common schedules.

Table 4

Most Common Work Schedules in Part-Time Jobs

Percentage of Part-Time Jobs	Work Schedules
7.9	4 hours/day, 5 days/week
6.8	8 hours/day, 2 days/week
6.3	8 hours/day, 3 days/week
5.0	5 hours/day, 5 days/week
3.7	4 hours/day, 3 days/week
3.7	5 hours/day, 3 days/week
3.3	6 hours/day, 3 days/week
3.1	6 hours/day, 2 days/week
3.0	8 hours/day, 1 day /week
2.9	4 hours/day, 2 days/week
2.9	3 hours/day, 5 days/week
55.2	All other schedules

Source: Statistics Canada. Survey of 1981 Work History. Cat. 71-001, October 1982, from Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Part-Time Work.

[13] Ernest B. Akyeampong, "The Changing Face of Temporary Help", Perspectives on Labour and Income, Summer 1989, p. 44.

[14] Ibid., p. 46.

ALTERNATIVE WORK SCHEDULES AND JOB SHARING

There has been considerable discussion about workers with family responsibilities during the past few years. Whether these responsibilities include caring for young children, an aging parent, or other dependents, there is a growing recognition of the needs of workers in today's society. In 1987, the Canada Employment and Immigration Advisory Council presented a report entitled Workers with Family Responsibilities in a Changing Society: Who Cares? Recognizing the importance of part-time work to persons with increased family responsibilities, the report recommends the encouragement of alternative work patterns.

Job sharing is a form of part-time work where two employees voluntarily arrange with their employer to share one full-time job and salary. Job sharing is not widespread. The Commission of Inquiry into Part-Time Work estimated that job sharers number only a small fraction of one percent of the work force. Most job sharers are professional women with children, with high educational levels (85 percent have post-secondary education).[15] An estimated 87 percent come from two-income families.

The Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) maintains that "Job sharing is plainly and simply part-time work. There is only one difference: in a job sharing scheme, two workers voluntarily agree to

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[15] Commission of Inquiry, p. 177.

split one full-time job between them. It is the voluntary aspect that is used as the selling point."[16] CUPE warns women entering job-sharing arrangements of potential downgrading of their jobs and loss of promotion opportunities. They have called on all unions to be "on their guard to ensure that this trend [job-sharing] does not interfere with the ongoing struggle for workplace equality".[17]

The 40-hour, 5-day work week is increasingly being challenged as the "one and only", "normal" or "standard" work schedule. Many argue for a move to a shorter work week as the norm for all workers rather than for an increase in part-time work. It is clear that two separate labour forces exist: those who work full-time and those who work part-time. However, those who work part-time because they cannot secure full-time work are severely disadvantaged. It has often been suggested that a more humane alternative would be to reduce the hours of full-time work and increase the hours of part-time work, meeting somewhere in the middle. Historically, the work week has been set at 40 hours, but many argue that this week was developed for men, most of whom had wives at home to look after their family responsibilities. In 1989, very few families fit the traditional model consisting of a male breadwinner and a woman at home with children.

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[16] Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), "Job-Sharing", in The Facts, May-June 1985, p. 43.

[17] CUPE, p. 43.

PART-TIME WORK: THE ADVANTAGES

Employees

The Ontario Status of Women Council noted in its 1982 brief to the Commission of Inquiry that part-time work does have the potential to provide an excellent alternative precisely because of the accommodation it provides for workers with other responsibilities, whether they be family, further education, etc. The Council maintained that,

> Part-time work offers a viable solution for those preparing for retirement at a gradual pace. For those already retired, part-time work offers an opportunity to keep active in the labour market and this can be beneficial to both an employer seeking knowledgeable, experienced help and to the pensioner wishing to supplement her/his income.[18]

Akyeampong has identified some of the principle reasons why people seek temporary jobs:

> For some, the work schedules of such jobs offer more flexibility to attend to other demands such as childcare, school or the desire for more leisure time. For others, temporary jobs are an intermediate step in the search for permanent work in the receiving firm or elsewhere. They also provide an opportunity to exercise or upgrade personal skills, or acquire a wider range of experience. For someone entering the job market after a long absence, these jobs may provide an opportunity to polish old skills, learn new ones, and improve their marketability.[19]

Employers

Numerous studies have highlighted the benefits received by employers from a part-time work force citing increased productivity, and decreased

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[18] Ontario Status of Women Council, p. 10.

[19] Ernest Akyeampong, "The Changing Face of Temporary Work", p. 44.

absenteeism, fatigue and error. Bossen reported in 1975 that "there are pros and cons, but the advantages appear to outweigh the disadvantages".[20] The results of her survey found the most frequently mentioned advantages were peak load staffing and staffing evening and weekend schedules.

With respect to temporary help, Akyeampong has determined that although employers choose to use temporary help for various reasons, the overriding reason appears to be cost minimization. He states,

> ...temporary workers may be taken on only when needed by businesses with sharply fluctuating peak-loads or whose activities are seasonal, as well as by those which require specialized professional services or skills for only a brief period. This way, the firm minimizes labour under-utilization. Uncertainty about the economic climate may cause some employers to seek temporary help: these workers can be let go with relative ease if they are no longer needed. Employers are also able to reduce costs associated with the hiring and training of new permanent employees by taking this route. Finally, use of temporary rather than permanent workers can reduce some labour-related "fringe-costs" (for example, employer contributions to group pension or dental plans).[21]

PART-TIME WORK: THE DISADVANTAGES

> "They treat you like shit...they take you for granted. When they call, they expect you to be there, they don't care if you work 10 days straight, they insist you come in...no regular schedule...they only give you an hour to get in after they call...they make you feel guilty if you don't come in." (Sandra, nursing home worker, Cumberland County)

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[20] Bossen, p. 33.

[21] Ernest Akyeampong, "The Changing Face of Temporary Help", p. 43.

> "No one wants to pay for the work you do and the work is always more than will fit the hours." (Joan, Eastern Shore)
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> "Part-timers get the shit work." (Helen, 37-year old widow with two children)

Employees

The 1983 Commission of Inquiry into Part-Time Work in Canada found conclusive evidence to support the view that part-time workers in Canada are treated unfairly.[22] According to the Commission, most part-time workers receive lower hourly rates than full-time workers, are denied access to pension and fringe benefit plans, and are kept in low skilled jobs with little opportunity for training, promotion, or advancement. In addition, the Commission found that most part-time workers are excluded from labour standards legislation and are thus denied the rights and protection granted to most full-time workers. Julie White concluded that:

> Part-time workers are largely confined to the lowest levels of low-paid job ghettos where they are paid less and provided with fewer benefits than their full-time counterparts. They may find themselves working at a constantly rapid pace during unsocial hours for which they receive no financial recompense. When they have served their purpose, they may be laid off, or simply not recalled, without notice, pay in lieu or severance pay. Part-time workers have little job security, particularly those who work on a casual basis.[23]

Benefits are not extended to part-time employees on the same basis as they are to full-time employees. Part-time workers earn less than

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[22] Part-Time Work in Canada: Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Part-Time Work, p. 21.

[23] Julie White, p. 21.

full-time workers on an hourly basis.[24] Part-time workers do not generally benefit from unemployment insurance benefits. This is so for two reasons. Firstly, many part-time workers do not work enough hours per week to meet the basic eligibility criteria for unemployment insurance benefits. Secondly, where they do meet the minimum hours to qualify, their earnings may be too low to be considered insurable.

The Nova Scotia Labour Standards Code does not explicitly define part-time work or a part-time worker. However, it is implicit that part-time workers and full-time workers are equal under the Code. However, because the Code provides basic protection primarily based on "normal working hours" and because those hours are defined by the particular work establishment, part-time workers are effectively excluded. For example, while all employees are entitled to a minimum of 4 percent vacation pay, only employees who work more than 90 percent of normal working hours in a 12-month period are eligible for vacation leave.

Part-time employment has been identified as potentially stressful for women.[25] Work stress is now recognized as one of the leading health problems for women, causing a variety of psychological and physiological disorders. Stress is heavily linked to jobs with few opportunities, benefits, promotional opportunities, poor job security and no access to the potential advantages of union representation. These negatives often characterize the current nature of part-time work. Furthermore, these stressors are compounded for involuntary part-time workers who may have

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[24] Julie White, p. 13.

[25] Graham S. Lowe. Women, Paid/Unpaid Work, and Stress. Ottawa: Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, March 1989, p. 31.

financial worries, difficulty in arranging part-time child care and a lack of self-esteem resulting from their second-class status in the work force and society.

UNIONS AND PART-TIME WORK

Traditionally, the attitude of unions to part-time work has been one of general opposition. However, unions in Canada are slowly moving away from this traditional outlook toward a more supportive approach. A Quebec union summed up the majority view very succinctly to the Commission of Inquiry:

> Two attitudes are possible: to denounce part-time work and demand its elimination, or to acknowledge the phenomenon but fight strongly to improve working conditions. We believe it is better to recognize its right to exist and fight the exploitation.[26]

Some argue that unions have contributed to the low status of part-time work because they deny membership to part-time workers and do almost nothing to improve the conditions of the part-time work force.[27]

The Commission of Inquiry found that unionization has barely touched the world of part-time work: "The percentage of part-time employees that belongs to a union or other group that bargains collectively with an employer is less than half the percentage of comparable full-time

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[26] Centrale des Syndicats Democratiques, in Part-Time Work in Canada: Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Part-Time Work, p. 93.

[27] Bruce O'Hara, Put Work in Its Place, Victoria, B.C.: Work Well Publications, 1988, p. 25.

employees".[28] However, where part-time workers are unionized, the Commission found that they fare better financially than do non-unionized part-time workers. Another noteworthy finding of the Commission reported that most part-time workers are found within the least unionized occupations. And further, "occupations which have the highest rate of unionization are relatively more attractive to men part-time workers than women part-time workers".[29]

MAKING THINGS BETTER

If we accept the fact that part-time work is here to stay, it is evident that the position of part-time workers needs to be enhanced. More protection is needed for part-time workers. In Nova Scotia, recent improvements for part-timers include:

1) Amendments to the Nova Scotia Pension Benefits Act which as of January 1, 1988, requires employers with pension plans to allow part-timers to join the plan if they earn more than $9,200 annually and have been with the employer for two consecutive years.

2) Effective January 1, 1988, a number of benefits were extended to some part-time workers in the Nova Scotia Civil Service. However, the restrictive definition used to define part-time workers has effectively excluded many women and men who have worked part-time for the government for many years. Among those workers excluded are those termed casual (any

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[28] Commission of Inquiry, p. 43.

[29] Commission of Inquiry, p. 43.

persons who does not work 12 months of the year).

Business has voiced considerable concern about legislation aimed at providing benefits to part-time workers. A company representative of J.D. Irving Ltd. recently told a New Brunswick Legislative Committee that part-time workers should not be entitled to the fringe benefits full-timers receive. He also expressed disapproval of leaves of absence for childbirth and adoption. Moves to provide such benefits are "ignoring the realities and necessities found in business enterprises".[30]

In a study of part-time work in the Maritimes, Margaret Dechman argues that extending pro-rated benefits to part-time workers would not create a drastic shock for private business. She points out that part-time workers who are not receiving benefits tend to be concentrated in firms where full-time workers are also not receiving any benefits.

> Pro-rated benefits for part-time workers would only effect those firms that are discriminating by providing benefits to their full-time staff and not for their part-time staff. [Survey results] show that only eighteen percent of part-time and twenty percent of seasonal workers who receive no sick leave are in firms where any full-time workers receive paid sick leave. Likewise, only eighteen percent of part-time and six percent of seasonal workers who receive no pension are in workplaces that offer pensions to full-time staff.[31]

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[30] "Part-timer benefits opposed by Irving", in Chronicle-Herald, Thursday, November 3, 1988.

[31] Margaret Dechman and Susan Clark, Part-Time Work in the Maritimes: A Brief presented to the Commission of Inquiry into Part-Time Work, Halifax, 1982, p. 8.

CONCLUSION

Women dominate the world of part-time work -- either because they have chosen this type of work voluntarily or have been forced to work part-time because they cannot find full-time work. As a recent article pointed out, "The growth of part-time work is neither inherently good nor evil."[32] However, while there is debate about whether part-time work is good or bad for women, there are few who disagree that current part-time work conditions demand considerable improvement. In those instances where women have chosen part-time work, we feel that serious attention must be given to examining the reasons for these decisions. We suspect that for many women this has not been a free choice, but the only alternative that enables them to participate in the paid labour force and uphold their family responsibilities. Until high quality, accessible, and affordable childcare is available to all women who need it, and until men become equal partners in household and family responsiblities, the choice between full-time work and part-time work will not be a free one.

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[32] McHenry and Small, p. 90.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1) that all protections currently provided to workers under the Nova Scotia Labour Standards Code be extended to part-time workers;

2) that legislation be enacted which will ensure that part-time workers are included in all benefit and pension plans (on a pro-rated basis) where an employers provides these benefits for full-time workers;

3) that the Government of Nova Scotia monitors the growth of part-time work in Nova Scotia and provides some mechanism to prohibit employers from using part-time work as a less costly alternative to full-time work;

4) that incentives be created to encourage employers to adopt alternative work schedules to assist workers (both full-time and part-time) to combine work and family responsibilities more easily.

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